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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT. (Optional)

Monthly Report -- Nicosia Bureau

FROM:

Chief, Operations Group

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

March 1988

STAT

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

1.

C/MOD

2.

3.

C/ESG

4.

5.

C/FED

6.

7.

C/ADD

8.

9.

C/HED

10.

11.

C/Computer Operations

12.

13.

14.

15.

Retain/Destroy

FORM 1-79

610

USE PREVIOUS EDITIONS

FBIS-4806-88

6 April 88

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Foreign Broadcast Information Service

THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group

SUBJECT : Monthly Report -- Nicosia Bureau -- March 1988

I. GENERAL

The new Cyprus government headed by Yeoryious Vasilou continued its settling-in process during March with very few signs of any significant departure from the policies of the former Kyprianou administration. In view of Communist support for the new president, one of our fears was that the new government might give a hard look at continued FBIS activity in Cyprus. However, this was quickly put to rest when early in the month the embassy received a Note Verbale from the GOC suggesting that we once again get together with the GOC to discuss an increase in our annual Honorarium payment. The embassy responded that we are prepared to discuss the issue whenever the GOC can fix a date. The texts of both Notes Verbale were transmitted to Washington.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. With the tension continuing in the Soviet Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the bureau's Chief Monitor/Russian Monitor and Senior Persian/Armenian Monitor took over the daily watch on Yerevan and Baku Domestic and International Services as March drew to a close, with assistance from almost all sections of the bureau. BBC Armenian/Azeri monitor Mark Sarafyan remained on TDY in Nicosia all month, until 30 March, the day before his retirement. The bureau kept open watch on the radios for several shifts early in the month and again on the night of 23-24 March, when London alerted us to a report that the Armenian party chief had made a televised appeal to the people to remain calm and to refrain from holding a planned demonstration on 26 March. Baku and Yerevan did not carry the report during our open watch, but did carry the item later the next morning.

Additional positions were hooked up to the 10-channel recorder so that Baku and Yerevan Domestic Services could be recorded from sign-on to sign-off daily. As the Persian/Armenian Monitor began preparing to take over the bulk of the Baku/Yerevan watch and resumed tutorial sessions to polish up her rusty Armenian skills, the bureau was left with only one full-time Persian monitor. To ease our workload, the BBC assumed coverage of our two early morning casts from Tehran Domestic Service as of 22 March. A coverage plan was established under which some Azeri and Russian casts will be phone-patched to the BBC daily, additional Baku International Service casts will be checked daily by the bureau's contract Turkish/Azeri monitor, and additional reliance will be placed on Arabic and other language versions from the radios which will be compared to Armenian versions to ease the Armenian workload and ensure the reliability of items produced from Armenian.

2. Reports of Saudi Arabia's purchase of Chinese "Silkworm" missiles and Israeli threats to destroy them led to a headquarters request on 26 March for a special watch on Saudi television for reports on the missiles. Nicosia Bureau started an open watch on the Saudi television First Program from satellite, established the current schedule of newscasts, and then maintained daily coverage of three daily programs into early April. Neither Nicosia nor Bangkok, however, were able to observe the Second Program, which had been seen on satellite in recent months.

3. The renewed "war of the cities" between Tehran and Baghdad raged throughout the month. Iraq's new ability to strike Tehran with missiles prompted much reaction among Iranian leaders and in Iranian media, much of it directed against the Soviet Union, which supplies Iraq with "Scud" missiles. Iran's criticism of the USSR was the subject of a 16 March Trends article. The war continued along the fronts as well, with Iran reporting the liberation of Halabjah on 17 March and claiming that Iraqi forces had bombed the city with chemical weapons. The bureau filed Video Selection Lists from extensive Tehran TV coverage of the city, and on 29 March IRNA announced that Tehran television would air a 32-minute documentary on Halabjah as well as relaying it for worldwide distribution via satellite. Although the bureau recorded Tehran television Network-1 that night and set up an intercept of two passfeed channels for the expected relay, the program was not monitored.

4. The local embassy asked the bureau from 11 to 13 March to watch for reaction from area media to the announced U.S. decision on closing the PLO office in New York. Responsive items from incoming and outgoing files were passed to the embassy, but the volume and tone of the reaction was not remarkable.

B. Technical

1. The construction of the six long-wire antennas in the compound was completed in March, and testing is to be carried out in April. The trenches for the antenna lead-in cables were covered and the grounds were cleared and leveled.

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3. Paris AFP upgraded its service to the bureau from 50 to 300 baud transmission speed on 23 March, at the same time going from the all-capitals Baudot code to ASCII, with capitals and lower case.

4. Extra fluorescent lighting fixtures were installed in the editorial and teletype areas.

5. Equipment received: One audio Amplifier, Videotek Model ADA-16, from Headquarters.

6. Equipment transferred: One Farinon meter/zalam panel for use with Farinon microwave communications equipment, to Abidjan Bureau.

III. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

1. Senior Editor [redacted] gave birth to a daughter, [redacted] on 17 March. Mother and daughter are doing well.

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2. Senior Editor [redacted] departed for the United States for R&R on 24 March.

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IV. VISITS

1. BBC Armenian monitor [redacted] departed on 31 March.

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2. TDY editors [redacted] and [redacted] completed their training programs, departing on 1 and 2 April, respectively.

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Bureau Chief
Nicosia Bureau

ATTACHMENT: Production Report